CANADIAN PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

PICTORIAL RECORD



A SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS SHOWING THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS AS THEY APPEARED BEFORE AND AFTER THE GREAT FIRE OF FEBRUARY 3rd, 1916.

CAN PAM 1916 NO. 5

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Mr. John H.,Grenville,
Fort Henry, 1980
KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA

THE STORY OF THE FIRE

THE destruction of the Dominion Parliament buildings by fire on the night of February 3, 1916, will live as a tragic chapter in Canadian history. Standing on the heights of Colonel By's old Barracks Hills, overlooking the broad sweep of the Ottawa River, the fine old Christian gothic architecture of the building had come to be as much a part of the Dominion as Niagara. The design was the expression of the genius of that noble architect, John Fuller; the corner-stone was laid by the Prince of Wales on his visit to Canada in 1861, and the building was completed in 1866, when it was occupied by the Legislature of Upper and Lower Canada. One year later it became the home of the Parliament of Confederation. ¶ The origin of the fire may never be known. It was first noticed in the reading room of the House of Commons, at nine o'clock in the evening, and a quarter of an hour later it had spread with such appalling rapidity that four lives had been lost. Among the dead was Bowman B. Law, Liberal member for Yarmouth, N. S. Before half past nine o'clock the Commons chamber was a seething caldron of fire, one hour later the flames had enveloped the Senate, and before eleven o'clock the whole structure was a sea of surging fire and smoke. The flames played through the hundreds of pointed gothic windows, through arches and niches of stone, shedding a lurid light on the carved capitals of columns, the ornamental pinnacles, the symmetrical trefoils, the symbols of the trinity of our Christian faith. Most pathetically spectacular of all was the burning of the tower over the main entrance. Like a giant fiery serpent the flame wound its way higher and higher to the iron crown and gallant flag pole, to the tower light which to the last moment burned on like a beacon of hope above. The clock dials glistened out the hours as they had never done before, and stood still at half past eleven, but at the fateful hour of midnight the toll of twelve boomed out by the bell in the tower which a little later crashed down among the mass of ruins below, followed by the upper portion of the tower itself. In the morning when the fire had spent its fury there remained only the gaunt and empty walls enclosing a mass of twisted girders and frozen debris. Within those battered walls most of the statesmanship of Canada was expressed. Shades of Macdonald, of Tupper, of Howe, of McGee, of Cartier, of Blake, of all the giants of days that are gone, must hover about the place, dear to them as a home, consecrated by them to the service of the State. ¶ From the ashes and ruins a new structure will arise. A new monument to national faith, to British love of Liberty will stand upon the despoiled ruins of the old. :-: :-: :-: :-: :-: :-:

THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF CANADA

His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, came to Canada as Governor-General on October 13, 1911. Since that time both he and Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Connaught, have greatly endeared themselves to Canadians by their untiring interest in all matters concerning the welfare of the Dominion. Their daughter the Princess Patricia has also become exceedingly popular and her name is destined to be written in imperishable characters in Canadian history by reasons of the unparalled heroism and gallantry of that noble band of men who left these shores shortly after the outbreak of war to fight the battles of the Empire in the fields of Flanders—the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry—a regiment named after her and to which she presented colors worked by her own hands.



DUKE OF CONNAUGHT



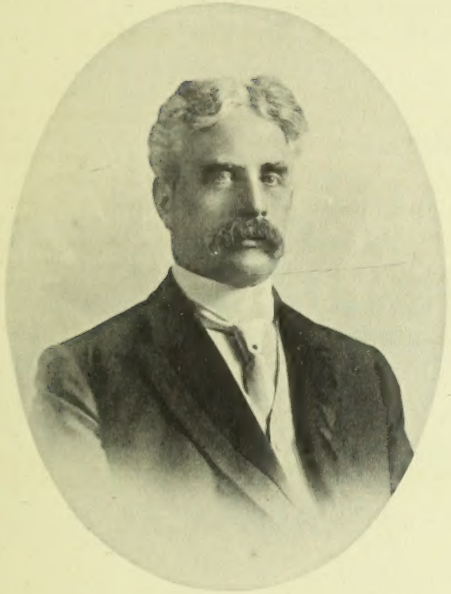
DUCHESS OF CONNAUGHT

SIR WILFRID LAURIER

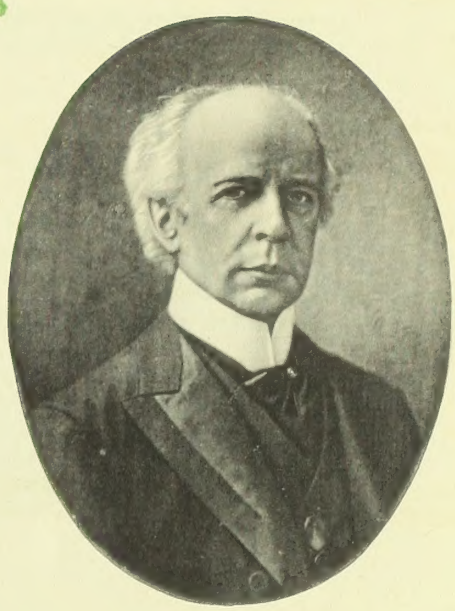
"The old Parliament Building in which we sat yesterday, and which has been identified with the life of the Canadian people since Confederation, is a mass of ruins. Great though the material loss is to every member of Parliament, to those of the present day and to those of an older generation still living, the loss of life is still more appalling. We had become attached to the scene and to everything which appertained to that building. To the people of Ottawa especially it will be a sad loss, because it was part of the life of the community, and it was the pride of every Canadian who came to Ottawa to see the British flag floating on the stately tower. The noble building will rise again with no loss of time and we will see it again at no distant date in its pristine beauty."

SIR ROBERT BORDEN

"As to the historic building itself, my own association with it has now extended over a period of nearly twenty years. The building dates from the very earliest years of Confederation, or even before Confederation. In that Chamber the great policies were debated and worked out which have touched the development of our Country and its future destiny. In that Chamber the great men who founded this Confederation spoke, and did their duty as representatives of the people in Parliament from the inception of Confederation through the active period of their lifetime..... The destruction of the building is the loss of a great historic monument."



RIGHT HON. SIR ROBERT BORDEN, P.C., G.C.M.C.,
Prime Minister



RIGHT HON. SIR WILFRID LAURIER, P.C., G.C.M.C.
Opposition Leader

THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

The view opposite shows the magnificent structure as it appeared before the fire. The location of the Parliament Buildings is generally acknowledged to be the most beautiful in the world, and the surrounding grounds are laid out in a very tasteful and attractive manner. This spot for years has been a veritable Mecca for tourists from all parts of the world.



THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

AFTER THE FIRE

The view opposite shows what the smoking ruins looked like the day after the fire. The entire roof, interior and upper portion of the main tower are gone, but the walls remain intact and in fact undamaged. The rebuilding will not necessitate the removal of scarcely a single stone.

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AFTER THE FIRE

THE BURNING OF THE TOWER

The view opposite is from an actual photograph taken shortly after midnight on the night of the fire. The giant clock in the tower continued to boom out the time hour after hour, as the flames gradually ate their way through the magnificent structure. By midnight they had reached the main tower and passed over to the Senate side. The fateful hour of midnight was the last the great clock tolled out. Its day had ended, and with it the noble building in which had occurred so many historic incidents in Canadian history. By one o'clock the flames had reached the top of the tower, and it fell a few minutes later, the most spectacular feature of the tragic event.



THE BURNING OF THE TOWER

INTERIOR OF THE COMMONS CHAMBER

The view opposite shows the Commons Chamber as it appeared before the fire. On the centre left can be seen the Speaker's chair and dias, and directly above, the Press Gallery where the newspaper reporters were located. The public galleries ran round the four sides of the chamber. Fortunately on the night of the fire very few people were in the galleries, and only about fifty members in the chamber. Had an important debate been on, the death-roll would undoubtedly have been very much larger.



INTERIOR OF THE COMMONS CHAMBER

RUINS OF THE COMMONS CHAMBER

The view opposite shows all that was left of the Commons Chamber after the fire. The beautiful room was completely destroyed and it is here the only member of Parliament to lose his life. Mr. B. B. Law, doubtless met his death. It is thought he went back to get some papers from his desk and so quickly did the flames spread he was unable to get out.



RUINS OF THE COMMONS CHAMBER

THE SENATE CHAMBER

The view opposite shows the Senate Chamber as it appeared before the fire. The seating arrangements and general appearance was quite different from the Commons. It is here that the opening and closing ceremonies of parliament were conducted by the Governor-General.



RUINS OF THE SENATE CHAMBER

The view opposite shows the Senate Chamber as it appeared after the fire. It was, like the Commons Chamber, completely destroyed, but fortunately many valuable paintings of historic in figures Canadian history which hung in the outer galleries were removed before the flames reached the Senate side of the building.



BASE OF MAIN TOWER

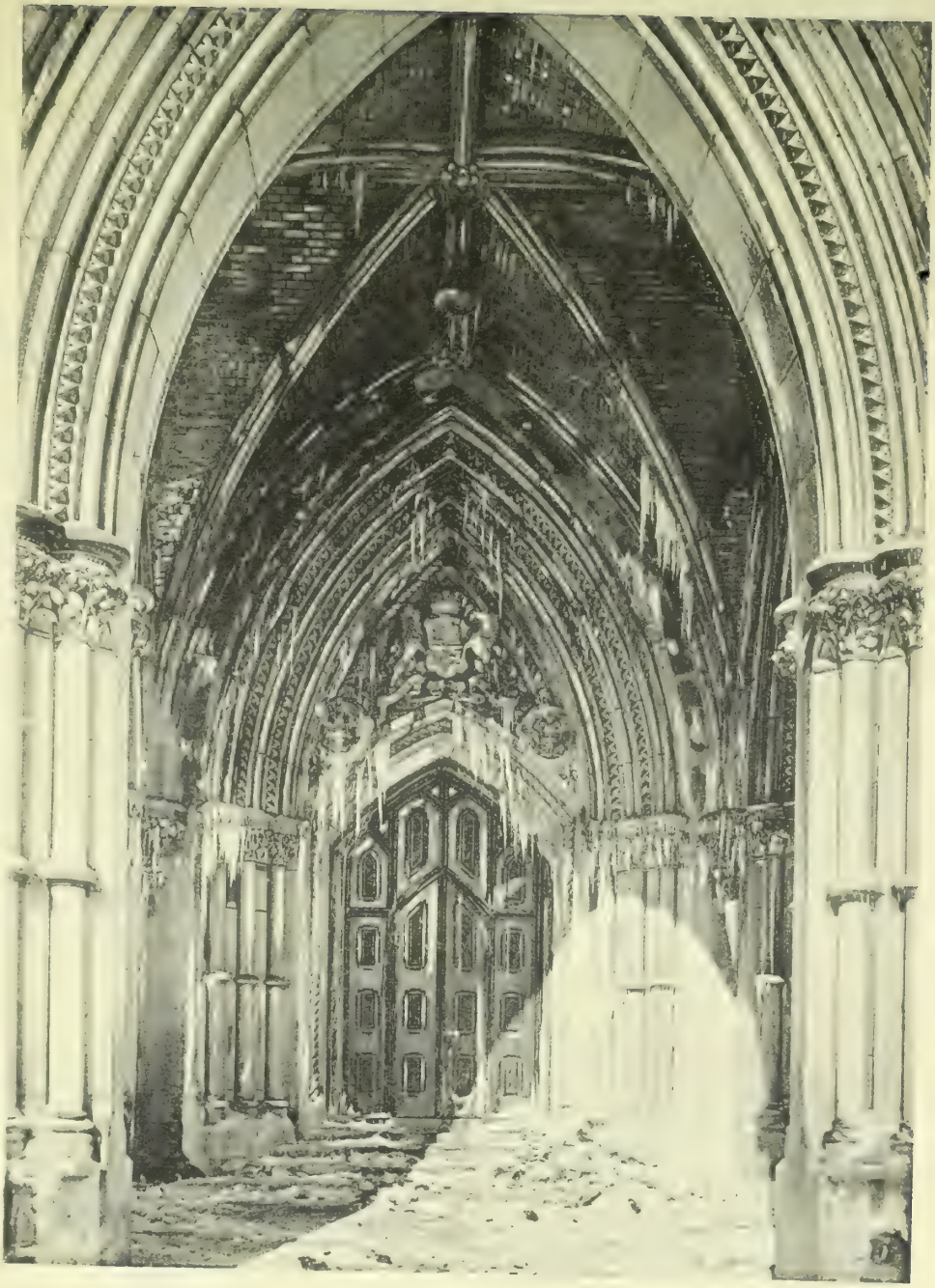
This tower stood in the centre of the front of the Parliament buildings, and was a stately piece of architecture. Beneath was the main doorway. From the top of the tower a wonderful panoramic view unfolded itself, the entire city and country round about for scores of miles standing out to the eye like some wonderful picture in relief.



BASE OF MAIN TOWER

MAIN DOORWAY BENEATH TOWER

The view opposite gives some idea of the architectural beauty of the main tower. Directly above the door the Royal Coat of Arms is cut in the solid stone. Fortunately the outer walls of the tower and building were uninjured, and will not need to be rebuilt.



MAIN DOORWAY BENEATH TOWER

THE ROTUNDA

The view opposite shows the rotunda entered through the main door beneath the tower. The steps shown led up to the lobby outside the Commons chamber. On the left of the rotunda similar steps led up to the lobby outside the Senate chamber. As the picture shows, the fire did little damage but the wood work was burned in places.



THE ROTUNDA

LOBBY OUTSIDE COMMONS CHAMBER

The view opposite shows the appearance of the lobby outside the Commons Chamber after the fire. The Chamber was located on the left of the picture, and the Commons post office on the right. All woodwork in this part of the building was almost completely destroyed.



LOBBY OUTSIDE COMMONS CHAMBER

THE MAIN TOWER FROM THE WEST

The view opposite is from a photograph showing the main tower as it appeared before the fire. At the base of the flag pole a cluster of electric lights showed at night whether the Commons was in session. The lights went out immediately the House adjourned.



THE MAIN TOWER FROM THE WEST

THE MAIN TOWER AFTER THE FIRE

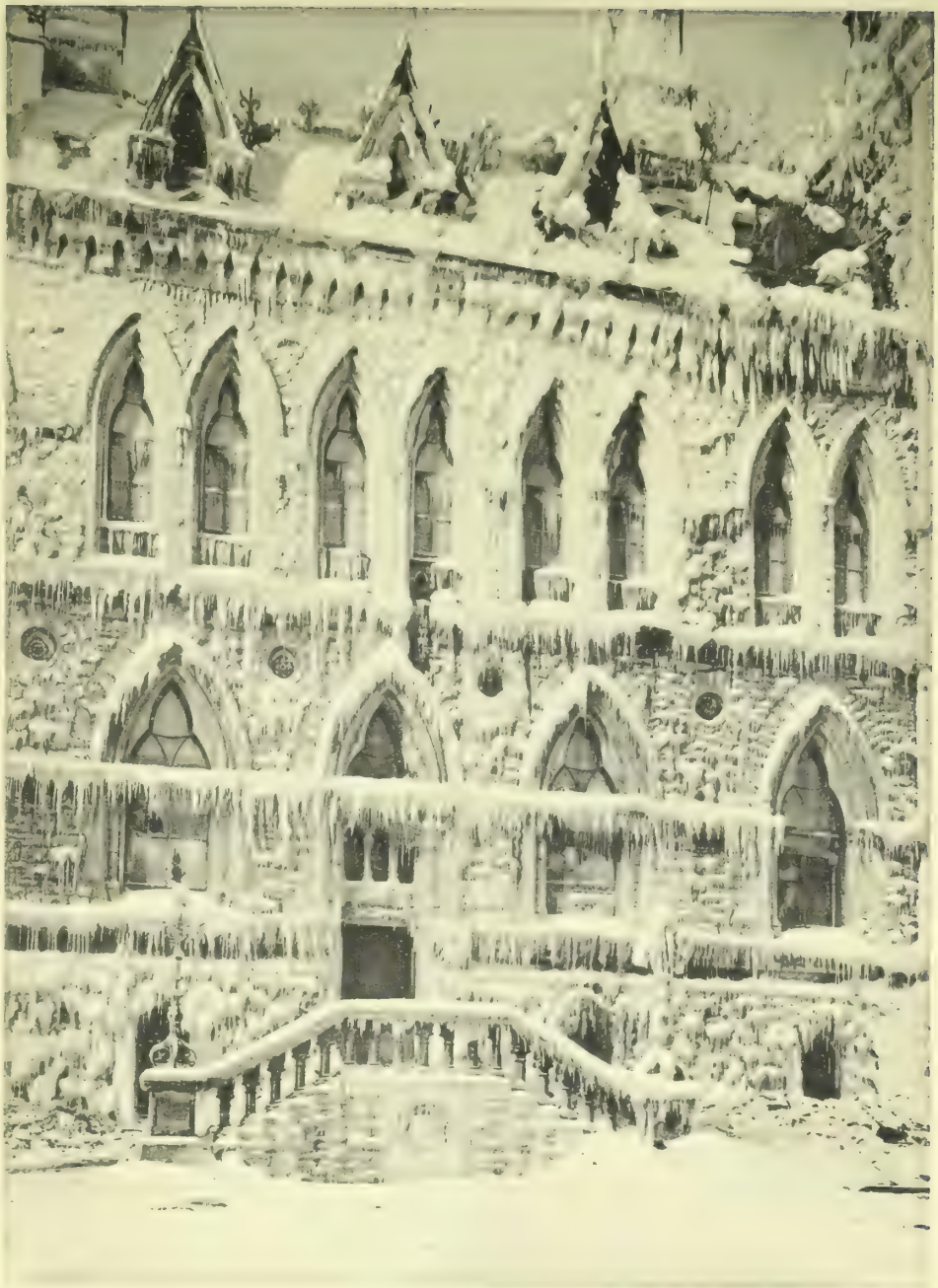
The view opposite shows how the tower looked after the fire. This photograph was taken from about the same position as the view which appears on the preceding page.



THE MAIN TOWER AFTER THE FIRE

THE ICE-ENCRUSTED WALLS

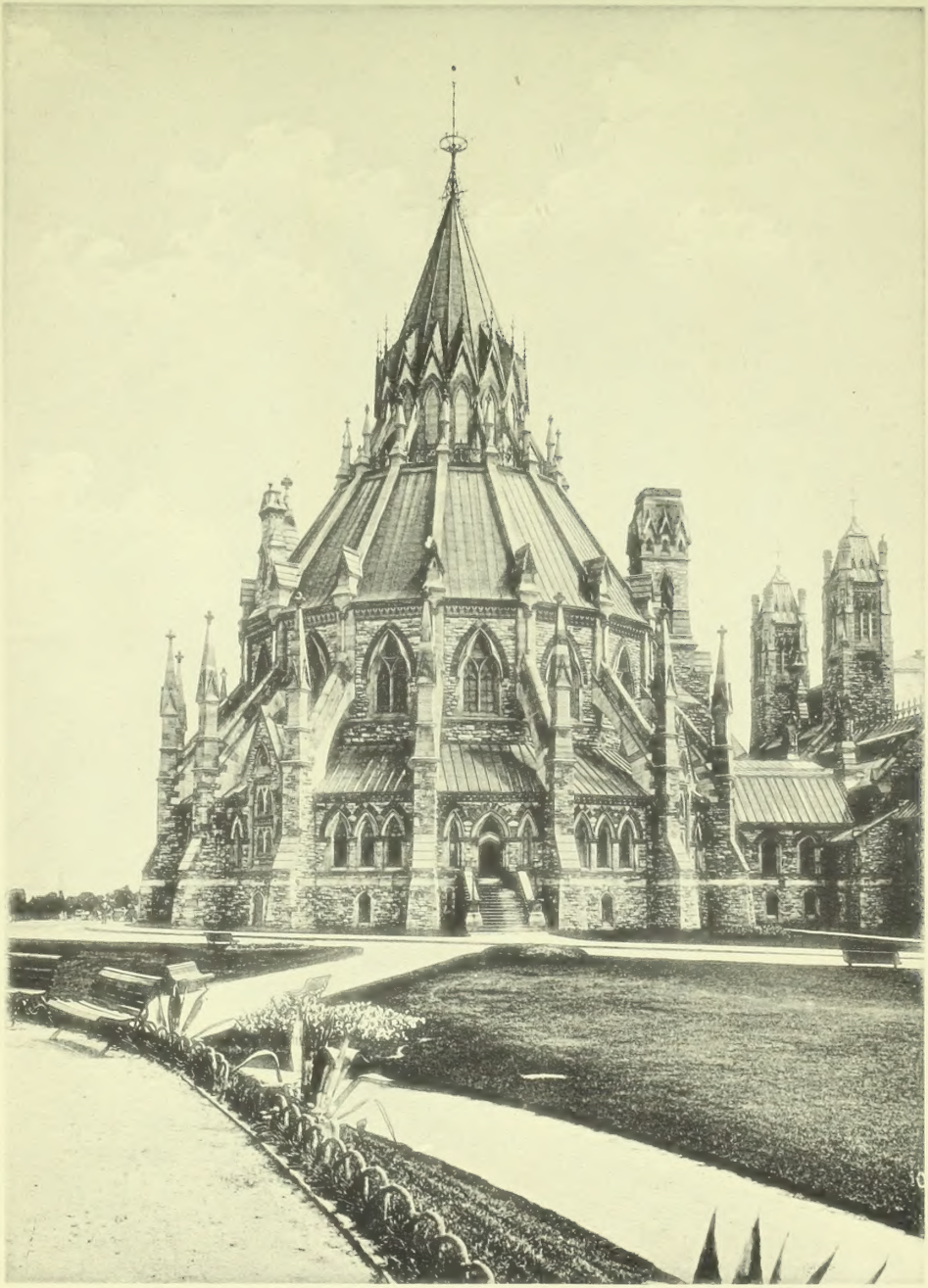
The view opposite gives an idea of the appearance of the walls after the fire. Millions of gallons of water were poured into the blazing building and as it dripped from roof and window it become frozen, giving the walls the appearance of a huge ice castle.



THE ICE-INCRUSTED WALLS

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

The view opposite shows the Library of parliament which adjoined the burned building. It contains a priceless collection of books, and was only saved from destruction by the herculean efforts of the city firemen. The building itself is considered one of the finest pieces of architecture in the world.



LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

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